



Coronavirus Resources: Veterans

American Rescue Plan

Oregon's U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley pushed for passage of President Biden's *American Rescue Plan* to get stimulus checks in Americans' bank accounts, help Main Street businesses stay afloat, and save the unemployment insurance program that 20 million Americans are relying on to make ends meet.

With this bill, urgently needed resources will be delivered to state, local, and tribal governments so they support the health of communities, and also pay firefighters, first responders, and other critical employees. Resources will go to schools and educators so they can safely get students back in the classroom. Resources will go to struggling families who are balancing work, school, and childcare from home. Resources will get personal protective equipment in the hands of frontline health heroes. And resources will mobilize a massive, national vaccine distribution plan to get shots into arms, and get past this pandemic.

Veterans' Resources in the Bill

- \$386 million for up to 17,250 eligible veterans who are unemployed due to COVID-19 to receive up to 12 months of retraining assistance for high-demand occupations.
 - This retraining assistance also provides a housing stipend and does not count against other educational benefits previously entitled to veterans.
- \$7.25 billion nationwide for additional first- and second-round Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans to eligible veteran-owned small businesses until the program expires on March 31, 2021.
- \$276 million for the VA to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on the benefits claims and appeals backlog exacerbated by COVID-19 related shutdowns, including for staff increases for FY22 and for the Veterans Benefits Administration to expand the scanning of service records.
- \$13.5 billion for the Veterans Health Administration to provide healthcare services and related support to eligible veterans, including to cover the impacts of pandemic-related delays in necessary care and to extend *CARES Act* service expansions in the areas of suicide prevention, women's health, VA homelessness programs, and telehealth.
- \$100 million in funding for investments in information technology systems to support the acceleration of the VA's supply chain modernization efforts.
- \$500 for VA construction of State Veterans Homes (SVHs) and \$250 million in one-time emergency federal payments to support these state-operated facilities for eligible veteran residents, including for enhanced treatment of veterans at SVHs during the pandemic, staffing expansions, and the provision of PPE.
- Allows the VA to waive up to \$2 billion worth of copays that would otherwise be charged to veterans for VA healthcare services from April 6, 2020 through September 30, 2021.

For updates: Visit merkley.senate.gov/coronavirus for updates on these and other resources.